



Ballyholme Primary School

Developing pastoral care provision

Ballyholme Primary School is located in the town of Bangor, County Down. Over the past five years the enrolment has remained steady and at the time of the September 2016 inspection stood at 628 pupils.

This case study focuses on the development of the school's pastoral care provision as a Rights Respecting School.

The inspection team identified the school as having a high level of capacity for sustained improvement. All key areas – achievements and standards, provision for learning, leadership and management – were found to be very good. Pastoral care was found to be outstanding.

Reviewing the school's ethos

The current Principal has been a member of staff in the school for 16 years. In her previous role as Vice-Principal (VP), the need to develop further the staff team and the school's ethos was acknowledged. At that time, whilst there were no behaviour issues in the classrooms, there seemed to be a general lack of warmth and respect within the school.

An audit of the school's ethos identified that there was a mismatch of views on ethos between the senior leadership team (SLT), teaching staff and non-teaching staff, and that the provision for pastoral care required development across the school.

A Rights Respecting School

In 2010 the school registered for the Unicef Rights Respecting Schools (RRS) award which provided the framework to develop the ethos of the school and all aspects of the school's pastoral provision.

Initially there was apprehension and uncertainty among some of the staff about the initiative and so training and development was key to its success.

The school achieved the highest level of the RRS award in 2016.

Key aspects of the RRS framework that have been embedded into school life are outlined below.

The classroom charter

This was the starting point to which all children and adults signed up. This provides the structure to address behaviour issues. Behaviours can be discussed and children can recognise and adjust their behaviours accordingly; it empowers and gives responsibility to children. The school's positive behaviour policy and discipline policies were also reviewed in line with the classroom charter.

Since engaging with the RSS initiative, discipline at the school has changed; rewards are now used more often than sanctions.

The parents' charter

Parents were involved and a parent's charter was created.

The school council

The school council is made up of children from all key stages and has an active voice within the school. Examples of the pupil voice within the school include being consulted on the appointment of classroom assistants and devising possible questions for interview. Another example is the school council's responsibility for charity work within the school.

Suggestion boxes

Suggestions are considered by the school council fortnightly and taken forward as appropriate. For example, suggestions concerning school dinners were discussed with the head cook and new recipes were introduced. This ensures that pupil voice is heard and is instrumental in effecting positive change at the school.

Supporting staff members

Care and support for members of staff is also a priority for the school. All staff are treated with respect and due consideration.

The SLT and middle leaders have developed strategies and a language to support and challenge colleagues in a safe and secure manner whilst also ensuring high expectations and standards.

All staff are valued equally and all reap the benefits.

Parental engagement

A key feature of the school's focus on relationships is the effective communication between teachers and parents and a culture of mutual respect.

The school operates an open-door policy and Foundation Stage parents are encouraged to bring their children into the classroom in the morning. A 15 minute window exists so that any

pertinent issue, no matter how small, can be discussed prior to the start of the school day.

Teachers engage with parents both informally and formally through parent workshops on how to support children in their learning.

Supporting effective transitions

There are now more effective transitions within the school, between year groups and key stages, for example at the pre-school / primary one and KS2 / KS3 transition.

A steering group which includes representatives from the teaching staff, parents, the school council and governors oversees the implementation of changes to the pastoral care system.

This democratic approach is key to maintaining momentum and success. Keeping pastoral care on the agenda, and reviewing it regularly at various levels ensures that all staff play a role in ensuring its success.

For further information, please contact:

Ballyholme Primary School

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The Controlled Schools' Support Council

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